

This Week in Washington



WITH CONGRESSMAN
JO BONNER

The Best Laid Plans

As John Steinbeck wrote, "The best-laid plans of mice and men often go awry," and so it went for me last week.

My intentions were to return to Washington, D.C. last week and join the more than 130 of my colleagues, who have taken to the House floor during the five-week recess, to demand that Congress reconvene and pass legislation to make America independent of foreign oil.

Since Speaker Nancy Pelosi adjourned the House of Representatives on August 1 without allowing a vote on legislation to increase American energy production and lower gas prices, House Republicans have spoken out in opposition in a darkened House chamber without microphones.

Over the course of this month, I have held 12 town hall meetings, spoken with at least 20 civic clubs and organizations, and had a full schedule of office appointments. Without question, the top concern raised was skyrocketing energy prices.

I was looking forward to joining my colleagues in speaking out on the House floor and sharing the concerns I had heard from so many of you over the past few weeks.

However, it was not meant to be. Last Monday afternoon with Tropical Storm Fay bearing down on Alabama, my flights out of Mobile were cancelled.

I tried to fly out again Tuesday morning, but with a ground stop in Atlanta, my flight was delayed to where I would not have been able to return to Washington in time to join my colleagues on Tuesday.

I commend my colleagues for their efforts over the course of this five-week

recess. It is their efforts that have pushed this debate forward, and I am hopeful that Speaker Pelosi will finally schedule a vote to make America independent of foreign oil and bring down the price of energy.

South Alabama Says Goodbye to a Legend

Bay Minette and the entire state of Alabama lost a dear friend late last month - Mr. James H. Faulkner Sr.

Known to his many friends simply as "Mr. Jimmy," he was an individual who made countless contributions throughout his 92 years.

First and foremost, Mr. Jimmy loved Bay Minette; he loved Alabama; and he loved our country.

He answered his nation's call to service and attained the rank of first lieutenant serving as pilot and flight instructor in the U.S. Army Air Corps during World War II. When Mr. Jimmy went back to Alabama following his military service, he returned to what was already a successful career.

He was the owner of the Baldwin Times newspaper and had served as mayor of his beloved Bay Minette. In fact, when Mr. Jimmy was elected mayor in 1941, he was said to be the youngest mayor in America.

Years later, Mr. Jimmy went on to serve Baldwin, Monroe and Escambia Counties by becoming one of Alabama's most respected and influential state senators. He also ran twice for governor of Alabama.

Mr. Jimmy blazed a trail of success in the world of business, spanning 42 years as the owner and publisher of a chain of south Alabama newspapers, and he served as president of seven radio stations in Alabama and Georgia. However, he was not a person to rest on his laurels.

Mr. Jimmy's entrepreneurial talents gave him the confidence to start Loyal American Life Insurance Company of Mobile. During most of the past 50 years, he was associated with Volkert & Associates, one of the top engineering, architectural, planning and environmental firms in the United States.

He served on the boards of two Baldwin County banks as well as Alpine Laboratories of Bay Minette.

Undoubtedly, Mr. Jimmy's legacy will be his lifelong dedication to improving education. He served as chairman of the board of directors for Alabama Christian College in Montgomery, which was renamed Faulkner University in his honor and now has campuses in Huntsville and Mobile.

He was instrumental in bringing a two-year college to Baldwin County, which became the James H. Faulkner State Community College in Bay Minette. During his tenure as a state senator, Mr. Jimmy was credited with establishing the teacher's retirement system.

He was awarded eight honorary doctorate degrees in law and humane letters, and he served on several commissions that worked to improve Alabama's secondary education system.

In 1992, the Alabama State Senate and House of Representatives passed a resolution commending Mr. Jimmy for his outstanding personal achievement.

Over his lifetime, Mr. Jimmy received more than 35 awards. He was named the North Baldwin Chamber of Commerce "Person of the Century" in 2000, and in 2003, he was awarded the Alabama Press Association's "Lifetime Achievement Award."

Our thoughts and prayers go out to his family – his wife, Karlene; his two sons; eight grandchildren; and 14 great grandchildren – as well as his many friends at this difficult time.

My staff and I work for you. If we can ever be of service, do not hesitate to call my office toll free at 1-800-288-8721.

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